

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /081 W

----- 115330

R 031955Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7648

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 35897

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LA FR

SUBJ: LAO NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION IN PARIS

REF: VIENTIANE 2809

1. LAO PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (LPDR) AMBASSADOR
KEO VIPHAKONE GAVE A LARGE RECEPTION AT A HOTEL
FREQUENTLY USED BY THE INDOCHINESE COMMUNISTS TO
CELEBRATE THE LPDR FIRST ANNIVERSARY. THE COOL STATE
OF FRANCO-LAO RELATIONS WAS MADE MANIFEST BY THE
PRESENCE OF THE DESK OFFICER FOR LAOS AND CAMBODIA,
THE LOWEST POSSIBLE REPRESENTATIVE, AS THE SENIOR
QUAI REPRESENTATIVE. (FORMER AMBASSADOR TO LAOS
PIERRE MILLET ALSO ATTENDED, BUT IN A PURELY PRIVATE
CAPACITY.) THE CHINESE SENT THREE REPRESENTATIVES
HEADED BY THE FIRST SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
(FOURTH RANKING ON THE DIP LIST). THE SOVIETS
SENT AT LEAST TWO REPRESENTATIVES, BUT THEY WERE
APPARENTLY NOT VERY HIGH-RANKING. THE THAI
AMBASSADOR CAME, BUT STAYED ONLY A SHORT WHILE; HE
CHATTED WITH PHENG NORINDR, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO
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SOUVANNAPHOUMA, WHOM HE HAD KNOWN WHEN BOTH WERE IN

WASHINGTON. ONE PERSON WAS IDENTIFIED TO THIS EMBASSY'S REPRESENTATIVE AS A DEMOCRATIC CAMBODIAN REPRESENTATIVE. OTHER SIGNIFICANT REPRESENTATIVES WERE THE RUMANIAN AMBASSADOR, WHO PRIDES HIMSELF ON ATTENDING EVERY NATIONAL DAY, AND THE YUGOSLAV MINISTER.

2. THE SRV WAS STRONGLY REPRESENTED SINCE THE AMBASSADOR AND DCM AS WELL AS OTHER MEMBERS OF VIETNAMESE ORGANIZATIONS IN PARIS ATTENDED. THE VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR ARRIVED EARLY AND WAS STILL DANCING THE LAM VONG WHEN THE EMBOFF DEPARTED.

3. THE LAO BEGAN TO SING TRADITIONAL LAO MUSIC NEAR THE END OF THE PRESCRIBED PERIOD FOR THE RECEPTION; THE MUSIC HAD UNDERGONE NO CHANGE, BUT IN THE DANCING A CLENCHED FIST SALUTE OCCASIONALLY REPLACED THE MORE GRACEFUL, TRADITIONAL ARM MOVEMENTS. NONE OF THE FORMER LAO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN PARIS, EVEN THOSE NOT IN TOTAL DISGRACE, ATTENDED THE RECEPTION. MANY LAO STUDENTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, WERE PRESENT. PHENG NORINDR WAS THEREFORE ONE OF THE FEW LAO OLDSTERS OTHER THAN EMBASSY EMPLOYEES WHO WAS PRESENT, AND HE WAS EAGERLY INTERROGATED BY THE LAO STUDENTS ON CONDITIONS BACK HOME.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE RECEPTION WAS CLEARLY A MARKED DEPARTURE FROM THE MUCH WARMER AND MORE FAMILIAL CELEBRATION WHICH THE LAO EMBASSY USED TO GIVE AT ITS OWN EMBASSY, SOME ELEMENTS OF LAO FLAVOR STILL REMAINED. SINCE THE VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR APPEARS TO HAVE LEARNED THE LAM VONG VERY WELL, PERHAPS SOME ASPECTS OF TRADITIONAL LAO CULTURE MAY BE PERMITTED IN PARIS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS, SOCIAL RECEPTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PARIS35897
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760449-0256
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761275/aaaacmst.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 VIENTIANE 2809
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <16 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAO NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION IN PARIS
TAGS: PFOR, LA, FR, (KEO VIPHAKONE)
To: STATE VIENTIANE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006